

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF  
**COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**



# Main Street New Jersey

*A program of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs*



**Main Street  
NEW JERSEY**

*Back to the Future!*



James E. McGreevey  
*Governor*



Susan Bass Levin  
*Commissioner*

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*“Main Street”...Images of strolling to the avenue, after school ice cream cones and Fourth of July parades. It’s the American Dream. It’s stores and restaurants, movie theatres, banks, the post office and churches. It’s the place in our community that belongs to everyone. It’s real, and yet it’s in our hearts and minds. It’s about the past, and it’s about our future. It’s **Main Street!***

The “downtown” was once the center of it all. Typically, it satisfied shopping, worship, healthcare, social and educational needs of our region. But as surrounding towns around them grew, downtowns began to provide many of these services for themselves.

Now we see new developments attempting to “re-create” the main streets and village centers already in place. In light of this, Main Street New Jersey, a program of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is an excellent, low-cost way for New Jersey to encourage investment in our downtowns, and it is an essential piece of Governor McGreevey’s Smart Growth initiative.

Main Street New Jersey provides communities with technical assistance and training to revitalize historic downtowns and traditional commercial districts. The program helps municipalities throughout the state to improve their economy, appearance and image through the organization of local citizens and resources.

As a result, communities receive valuable technical support and training to assist in restoring town centers as the center of the community and economic activity. For example, many local businesses have received free architectural design, marketing, visual merchandising and small business consultations.

The results have been impressive! Many communities have seen new businesses and jobs, while watching existing businesses expand and become stronger. In addition, façade improvements and building rehabilitation projects have upgraded the “curb appeal” of many of New Jersey’s downtowns.

Through a comprehensive revitalization effort, downtowns have strengthened their economic vitality. Attracting new businesses and supporting existing businesses protect town’s present tax bases. Simultaneously, the economic viability of many of the buildings is increased. Façade renovations and signage upgrades enhance the aesthetic qualities within the downtown area. As more and more shoppers, visitors and local employees rely on what is offered in a downtown district, the increase in sales return greater revenues to the community. The over all net effect results in job creation, new opportunities and an increase in investment, while preserving and enhancing the community’s existing historical resources.

Revitalizing a downtown is not a quick fix. True success comes from using a comprehensive and incremental approach. Success is achieved through strong volunteer support, along with stable, long-term, local government commitment, and a willingness to develop public/private partnerships.

If you’d like more information regarding Main Street New Jersey, please contact:

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Main Street New Jersey provides its communities with technical assistance and training of proven value in revitalizing historic downtowns. This program helps municipalities improve their economy, appearance and image of their traditional central business districts through the organization of local citizens and resources.

During 2002, in Main Street New Jersey's communities, there has been more than \$68 million in physical re-investment. Of that, \$65 million represents money from the private sector. But what really says "*Main Street*" is the dollar value of \$715,000 in volunteer hours!

Here are a few more facts about Main Street New Jersey.

- In 2002, there was a net increase of 122 new businesses created and expanded. This represents a net gain of 311 new jobs in Main Street New Jersey's communities.
- Almost 200 buildings were rehabilitated and 11 new structures were built.
- Additionally, more than 125 buildings had various façade and signage improvements.

Since 1990, as a result of Main Street New Jersey activity, there has been almost \$386 million of physical reinvestment in Main Street New Jersey communities, with a 651 net gain of new and expanded businesses, and a net job increase of 3,924 positions.

Main Street New Jersey is vital and necessary to ensure those efforts will continue to revitalize and enhance New Jersey's smart growth.

## The Main Street Four Point Approach

DCA has outlined four elements that work in combination with each other to create a well-balanced, Main Street program.

1. **Organization** involves building a Main Street framework that is well represented and funded by local residents, merchants, property owners, civic groups, banks, public officials, etc. A strong organization provides the stability to build and maintain a long-term effort.
2. **Economic restructuring** involves analyzing current market forces to develop long-term solutions. Recruiting new businesses, creatively converting unused (and under-used) space for new uses, and sharpening the competitiveness of Main Street's entrepreneurial merchants are examples of some economic restructuring activities.
3. **Design** enhances the visual appearance, attractiveness and traffic management of the local business district. Historic building rehabs, street and alley clean-ups, parking and traffic calming issues, colorful banners, landscaping, and lighting all improve the physical beauty of the downtown as a quality place to live, shop, work, walk and invest.
4. **Promotions** include marketing and public relations activities to entice shoppers, investors, residents and visitors to your downtown district. Festivals, retail events and image development campaigns are some of the ways Main Street encourages consumer traffic in downtown districts.

## Benefits of Becoming a Main Street New Jersey Community

When a community participates in a comprehensive revitalization effort, its downtown can experience a return to economic vitality. Benefits of the Main Street program include:

- Protecting and strengthening the existing tax base
- Increasing sales and returning revenues to the community
- Creating a positive community image
- Creating visually appealing and economically viable downtown buildings
- Attracting new businesses
- Creating new jobs
- Increasing investment in the downtown
- Preserving valuable historical resources